The Southern Frontier

We dedicate ourselves to the task of doing the most and the best that can be done here and now.

VOL. V MARCH, 1944 NUMBER 3

The Southern Regional Council

Its Organization

On October 4, 1940, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Inc., instructed its Executive Committee "to take whatever steps are necessary to carry out the plans for the development of a council on southern regional development," which would include in its program the work of the Commission and other activities connected with the economic, educational, and social development of the South.

On January 6, 1944, after many months of work, and following the developments and instructions growing out of the conference of Southern Negroes, held in Durham, N. C. October 20, 1942, the conference of Southern whites held in Atlanta, Georgia, April 8, 1943, and the conference of Negroes and whites held in Richmond, Va., June 16, 1943, the Southern Regional Council was incorporated. At the meeting of the incorporators of the Southern Regional Council (Dr. Howard W. Odum, Dr. Charles S. Johnson, Dr. Rufus E. Clement, Bishop A. J. Moore, and Mr. Ralph McGill), held in Atlanta, Georgia, February 11, 1944, charter members of the SRC were designated: all members of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and all active participants in one or more of the conferences leading to the formation of the Southern Regional Council.

On February 16, 1944, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation met in Atlanta at a special meeting and took the following action:

> It being made to appear to the meeting that all of the Commission's obligations and liabilities have been fully discharged, and further that the Southern Regional Council, having been duly incorporated to carry on the work with ideals and program similar to those of this corporation:
>
> It was, upon motion duly made and seconded—*Resolved* that the corporation transfer and convey to the Southern Regional Council, Inc., a corporation of Fulton County, Georgia, all of its property of every nature whatsoever and wherever situated, absolutely and in fee simple.

On the same date the charter members of the Southern Regional Council met in Atlanta, adopted by-laws, elected officers, and formulated the initial policy of the organization, stating as their purpose the

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Its Program and Methods

The Southern Regional Council will operate in all of the states of the South in an effort to improve the region's economic, civic, social and racial conditions.

It proposes to promote greater unity among people and agencies in all efforts for regional and racial adjustment; to attain, through research and action, progress and equal opportunity for all people; to reduce race tensions, misunderstanding, distrust; to develop and integrate leadership in the South on new levels of national, regional and racial development. These are its long-time goals.

For its immediate objectives the SRC proposes to perfect its organization, to conserve and enlarge the scope of work now being done by the local and state interracial bodies; to take the preliminary steps necessary to bring about a realization of the long-time goals mentioned above, and to give immediate attention to war and postwar problems in the South.

The SRC plans to operate through several commissions in the fields of human relations, economic affairs, community welfare, public affairs, and cultural development.

The programs under these commissions will be sponsored with the aid of approximately 100 elected Fellows of the SRC, selected from the several states, and with the cooperation of local and regional religious, social, and economic groups.

One of the chief purposes of the SRC will be the development of new techniques and strategies for meeting constructively the problems of the region. To achieve this end the SRC will encourage the development of action groups at local, state and regional levels; recruit and develop leadership; develop necessary research through the universities and colleges of the region; seek to remold and articulate public opinion through the radio, press, speakers and publications; cooperate with and stimulate action in the region from Federal, state and local governments; conduct special experiments and programs in an effort to effect desirable changes in the South; render such specialized services as may be necessary in this connection; render such emergency services as may be necessary; hold technical conferences; promote fuller participation in democratic processes in the South; and utilize with greater effec-

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA, MARCH, 1944

To attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region.

Editorial

This is a most opportune time for launching the Southern Regional Council. In a sense, the eyes of the nation are upon the South today. The war has focused a spotlight upon democracy, revealing as never before her strength and her weakness. Here in the South democracy has been leading a double life. It has not yet squared itself with the problem of race and color, and that problem may well be the greatest one of the next century. What we do here in the South, then, has the most intimate kind of connection with the fortunes of democracy and the future of race relations, not only in this nation but in the entire world.

We have dedicated ourselves to the building of a better South, and we must not falter. History does not make itself. It is always made by people and their ideas. It can just as easily be made by people with good ideas as by people with bad ideas, if the people with the good ideas are willing to work hard enough. Somebody has to do more hard thinking and constructive work on this problem of race relations than has ever been done before, and it is up to the white and Negro leaders of the South to do it.

But how shall we define our problem in more specific terms? The very least we can do in order to square our habits with our democratic ideals is to try honestly and courageously to take the inequalities and inequities out of the biracial civilization of the South. If we devote our very best statesmanship and untiring energy for the next twenty years to the realization of this goal, we shall have served our generation well. We should not pretend to believe that this alone will solve the race problem, because we know that this problem is not so easily solved. But we can believe that it covers the next stage in the unfolding process which may lead to the ultimate solution of the race problem.

We in the Southern Regional Council are establishing a blue-print for the shape of things to come. We are building for the future—not one year, not five years, but for all the centuries that may lie ahead. Who knows but that the work we are undertaking here and now represents a turning point in the history of the South? If we, through this Council and its cooperating agencies, can bequeath our children a more democratic, a more abundant South, we shall have done our part toward the fulfillment of the great American dream. But, if we falter and fail, our children must bear a yoke of social handicaps greater than we have ever known.

South Carolina Incident

On February 29 the South Carolina House of Representatives passed a resolution which has attracted a great deal of attention. Introduced by Mr. John Long of Union, a lawyer and one-time private secretary to U. S. Senator Cole Blease, the resolution said, in part:

"We indignantly and vehemently denounce the intentions, utterances and actions of any person or persons and of all organizations seeking the amalgamation of the white and Negro races by a comingling of the races upon any basis of equality, as being destructive to the identity and characteristics and integrity of both races, and as being un-American and hostile to the existence and preservation of the American union of states . . .

"We reaffirm our belief in and our allegiance to established white supremacy as now prevailing in the South, and we solemnly pledge our lives and our sacred honor to maintaining it, whatever the cost, in war and in peace."

"That insofar as racial relations are concerned, we firmly and unequivocally demand that henceforth the damned agitators of the North leave the South alone."

This being the open season for political buncombe, one need not be greatly surprised by such a resolution, and one can take it with the proverbial grain of salt. The time was when such things were allowed to pass unchallenged, but times are changing. The South Carolina resolution was promptly challenged by two groups of South Carolinians, one a group of Negro citizens and the other a group of white citizens. In a letter to Representative Long, the Negro Citizens' Committee of South Carolina said: "Your resolution . . . is astonishing to the Negroes of South Carolina, especially in times like these. . . . Negroes throughout South Carolina disclaim any idea of amalgamation of whites and Negroes. . . . They are asking for full justice in the courts, . . . for the right to exercise their franchise in primaries where candidates are chosen to serve in public offices, and the denial of such rights is un-American and undemocratic. . . . The fight for such rights, whether instituted by an individual or an organization, if such fight is through the courts, state and federal, cannot be blasted as one of agitation and hostile to the existence and preservation of the American union of states."

Twenty influential white South Carolinians also issued a statement. They felt that it was time "to let our colored citizens know that the better element of white people in South Carolina do not think or feel as the House of Representatives," and they called for "a drastic revision in our attitude toward our colored citizens." Their statement went on to point out the following disadvantages which the Negro suffers: (1) denial of equal opportunity; (2) retarded economic status; (3) fixed status as a servant and menial; (4) inferior educational facilities; (5) frequent denial of justice in the courts; (6) discrimination in civic improvements; (7) lack of participation in his own government. Furthermore, the statement pointed out some constructive steps which need to be taken: (1) serious study of the race problem by white groups; (2) inclusion of Negroes on juries and other public bodies administering the laws; (3) better educational opportunities; (4) better mutual understanding between white and Negro workers; (5) fair wages and better working hours for domestic workers; (6) use of the ballot box by all qualified voters.

"Social equality," said these white citizens, "is not a part of the Negro problem in South Carolina," since "social life is of individual making." As for "white supremacy," they express the belief that "The only white supremacy which is worthy of the name is that which exists because of virtue, not of power."

This statement by white South Carolinians might well serve as a model for the citizens of other states who are weary of the agitation of the race issue by our own home-grown variety of demagogues. Lee Morris, in the St. Petersburg *Independent*, puts the matter this way: "Let's remember that white supremacy is as ugly a phrase as Negro supremacy, and for the same reason. We have a nation of human beings. Let them live together separately, as races, if you wish; let them marry separately, as races; but never let one race deny freedom and justice and opportunity and humanity again to the other."

SRC—Its Organization

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following directive from the charter of the organization:

> . . . the improvement of economic, civic, and racial conditions in the South, in the endeavor to promote a greater unity in the South in all efforts toward regional and racial development; to attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region; to reduce race tension, the basis of racial tension, racial misunderstanding, and racial distrust; to develop and integrate leadership in the South on new levels of regional development and fellowship; and to cooperate with local, state, and regional agencies on all levels in the attainment of the desired objectives.

An American Dilemma

Through a grant made by the Carnegie Corporation, Gunnar Myrdal, economic advisor to the Swedish government, and a member of the Swedish Senate, made a comprehensive study of the Negro problem and modern democracy in the United States. No mere review could encompass or interpret the wide range of this significant study designed to contribute to the general "advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding." (*An American Dilemma,* Gunnar Myrdal, New York. Harper and Brothers. 1944. 2 vols. $7.50.)

AN AMERICAN DILEMMA offers a basic challenge to the American people. Speaking of "America's Opportunity," Dr. Myrdal says:

● In the present phase of history this is what the world needs to believe. Mankind is sick of fear and disbelief, of pessimism and cynicism. It needs the youthful moralistic optimism of America. But empty declarations only deepen cynicism. Deeds are called for. If America in actual practice could show the world a progressive trend by which the Negro became finally integrated into modern democracy, all mankind would be given faith again—it would have reason to believe that peace, progress and order are feasible. And America would have a spiritual power many times stronger than all her financial and military reserves—the power of the trust and support of all good people on earth. *America is free to choose whether the Negro shall remain her liability or become her opportunity.* pp.1021-1022.

The two volumes merit extensive study. Here are a few comments, expositions and challenges pertinent to that section of the United States of which Dr. Myrdal has written:

● The pro-slavery theory of the antebellum South is basic to certain ideas, attitudes, and policies prevalent in all fields of human relations even at the present time . . . churchmen, writers, and statesmen of the South came out against the principle of equality as formulated in the Declaration of Independence. This principle came to be ridiculed as a set of empty generalities and meaningless abstractions. Indeed, it was "exuberantly false, and aborescently fallacious." p. 86-87

● Southern conservatism is a unique phenomenon in Western civilization in being carried to an established pattern of illegality. . . . In the South we have, however, the unmatched political spectacle that the liberals are the party of law and order, while the conservatives are the habitual transgressors. The party which works for change has the established law on its side, or rather, wants to enforce it, but has not the political power; the party which stands for the *status quo* has the power but not the law. . . . In the South a veritable reversal of the usual order of democracy has established itself. pp. 440-441

● Thus the opportunistic disrespect for law, order and public morals has a complicated causation and a deep-rooted history in the South. The tradition is today still part of the way of life and as such is often patriotically cherished as distinctively Southern. It is certainly one of the most sinister historical heritages of the region. It spells danger for a democratic society and involves serious maladjustments. p. 451

● There is an amazing avoidance of issues in Southern politics. The South votes for men—Democratic men—but rarely ever for issues, unless the issue is defined in black and white. We have to remember that in a measure this is a characteristic of all American politics. But in the South, it is driven to its extreme. p. 453

● . . . Keeping the Negroes disfrancised in the face of the clear-cut constitutional Amendments allows Southern conservatism nothing more than a pretense of respect for the law. On this most crucial point it is doomed to insincerity. p. 446

● It would generally be inexplicable why the South, with all its traditions of inequality and illegality, is so definitely on the way toward social democracy and law observance, and why it is not headed the other way. The conservative Southerner is not so certain as he sometimes sounds. He is a split personality. Part of his heart belongs to the American Creed. And if one argues that this is mere hypocrisy, he is entirely missing the point. The Southern conservative white man's faith in American democracy, which he is certainly not living up to, and the Constitution, which he is circumventing are living forces of decisive dynamic significance. p. 462

● When attempting to map the political opinions of white Southern liberalism, it must first be recalled that the region is exceptional in Western nonfascist civilization since the Enlightenment in that it lacks nearly ever trace of radical thought. In the South all progressive thinking going farther than mild liberalism has been practically nonexistent for a century. p. 469.

● As far as the cultural and social adjustment of the Negroes is concerned, the Southern police system is undoing much of what Northern philanthropy and Southern state governments are trying to accomplish through education and by other means. p. 450

● The South, particularly, needs a stress on the preventive aims and the peace-working functions of the police. p. 545

● In principle, the average white Southerner is no longer prepared to defend racial inequality of justice. p. 556

● Probably the most effective means of bringing the Southern courts more rapidly to acquire a fixed pattern of carefulness and equity would be the setting up of legal aid agencies everywhere in the South which, manned by high class professional lawyers, would be instructed not to work for any new legislation, but to assist poor whites and Negroes to enforce their rights under existing laws in civil and criminal cases. p. 556

● Court decisions are increasingly exposing the Southern statutes backing the system of institutional segregation as unconstitutional. This system is thus gradually losing its legal sanctions and increasingly depending upon extra-legal or illegal sanctions. p. 629

● "Social equality" is still a terribly important matter in the region. But it is not as important as it was a generation ago. p. 662

● The Negro hates the Negro role in American society, and the Negro leader, who acts out this role in public life, becomes the symbol of what the Negro hates. p. 774

● The Interracial Commission has not fulfilled the promises it once gave. . . . The respectability the Commission has built up for interracial work in the South is a form of capital, but as such it is of no use at all if it is not invested, and even risked, in new ventures. p. 849

● The post-war crisis in the South will not be minor. p. 849

● The South is far from having achieved the Commission's aims, and the liberal forces of the region are weak. p. 845

● It seems justifiable to predict a growing tension between the two regions, one which will not be restricted to the Negro issue. There is not going to be civil war, of course. The South has been, and is, changing rapidly, and Southern liberalism has been coming to be a force though it was practically nowhere in political power and today is fearfully timid on the Negro issue. p. 1015

● In planning for future race relations in the South the factor of personal intimacy and friendliness between individual whites and Negroes upon the old patriarchal principle should be left out entirely as lacking in practical importance. p. 649

● The great majority of Southern conservative white people do not see the handwriting on the wall. They do not study the impending changes; they live again in the pathetic illusion that the matter is settled. They do not care to have any constructive policies to meet the trends. They think no adjustments are called for. The chances that the future development will be *planned* and *led* intelligently—and that, consequently, it will take the form of cautious, fore-sighted reforms instead of unexpected, tumultuous, haphazard breaks, with mounting discords and anxieties in its wake—are indeed small. pp. 519-20

It Does Happen Here

● The U. S. Navy announces the appointment of 14 Negroes as Ensigns and Warrant Officers. Negro staff officers in the Navy are expected to be commissioned from civilian life.

● It was called a "Race Equality Book." It did not matter that there was no discussion of race equality in it. Someone said it was that. We refer to *The Races of Mankind* by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish. It is illustrated by Joseph Reinhardt. This is a ten-cent pamphlet, No. 85 in a series issued by the Public Affairs Committee. The USO banned it. The United States Army refused it for the use of our soldiers, who are of all races of mankind. . . . Most of the book contains hard, scientifically valid fact. Some times there is philosophy and social fact. Here is what is said about race prejudice:

> Race prejudice is, after all, a determination to keep a people down, and it misuses the label "inferior" to justify unfairness and injustice. Race prejudice makes people ruthless; it invites violence. It is the opposite of "good character" as it is defined in the Christian religion—or in the Confucian religion, or in the Buddhist religion, or the Hindu religion, for that matter.

● The President's Fair Employment Practice Committee reports that during the last six months of 1943 there was satisfactory compliance with 359 orders to cease discrimination against employees on account of their race, religion or alien origin. During this period 208 cases were dropped because of insufficient evidence, 256 were dropped for lack of merit, 127 were withdrawn by the complainant, and 36 were dismissed for lack of committee jurisdiction. Race was the basis for most of the discrimination, involving 716 cases. Cases arising out of religious discrimination numbered 127 during the period.

● The 93rd Air Squadron is the second unit of Negro fliers to see action in the European-African war theatres. The officers are Negroes.

● In an effort to offset the recent efforts of Negro school teachers to secure equalization of pay in South Carolina, the Charleston *News-Courier* proposes that one way of handling the matter would be to "classify by state legislation all professors and teachers in the public schools as public officers and elect them in the white primaries."

● The Twenty-fourth Regiment of the United States Army became the first Negro combat unit to go into action in the South Pacific. The War Department reports that the Regiment "gave a good account of itself in jungle warfare."

Opinion

THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER wants expressions from its readers on how they feel about the approach it plans to make in connection with a social action program in the South. It invites correspondence on matters that are close to the hearts and minds of Southern and Northern people. Through this channel of opinion it may be possible to arrive at a common ground of thinking, from which we can move forward to a higher plane of action.

The following excerpts from a letter written by a retired minister indicate some of the challenges we face:

> It is one thing to believe and proclaim the absolute Right in race relations; it is quite another thing boldly to challenge racial conventions and defy bitter prejudice and to ride roughshod to our goal, regardless.
>
> I speak from long experience—something painful. In pulpit and press I have declared for a treatment of colored peoples based on recognition of the oneness of the race and the brotherhood of all men, urging the present glaring and dangerous injustice to the Negro, sometimes at the cost of persecution from the whites—and having to conclude that I'd have got farther toward the goal by slowing my pace—and crying, "O Lord, how long!"

SRC—Program and Methods

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tiveness the untapped resources of the region.

Full instructions for interracial bodies wishing to affiliate with the Southern Regional Council will be issued during April. Meanwhile, *any agency or organization willing to subscribe to the principles of the Council may apply for affiliated membership with all the rights and privileges granted such membership by the Board of Directors of the Southern Regional Council.*

The Southern Regional Council was not initiated to deter, retard, limit or defend the South. Its organization and promotion were contrived in sheer necessity. It welcomes the cooperation of all people, all agencies, everywhere, who are willing to make the sacrifices and take the initiative needed to make democracy a reality in the region.

The Southern Regional Council is opposed to the demagogic handling of the South's problems by Northerners or Southerners, be they white or black. It sees the problems of the South as a special phase of the problems of our democracy. It believes that a more intensive application of the principles of democracy within the region will yield a people better able to apply the principles of democracy extensively throughout the nation and the world. It believes that a quarter of a century's experience in race relations has provided the South with the opportunity to meet the problems of democracy and citizenship in a bigger, more social way than ever before. It dedicates its program to doing those things in the best way possible—here and now.

Books of the Month

Elsewhere in this issue we have presented excerpts from *An American Dilemma.* No one with a sincere interest in the problems of race and color can afford to be unfamiliar with these volumes, not so much for the facts they present as for the interpretation given these facts.

Characteristics of the American Negro (Otto Klineberg, Editor) is the last volume in the Carnegie Foundation series of studies on the American Negro. This volume contains analyses of some of the more argumentative aspects of race relations—intelligence, personality, race attitudes, intermarriage, and passing. (Harper and Brothers, $4.00.)

Strange Fruit is a novel by Lillian Smith, editor of *South Today.* We know of no work of fiction that has created such a stir in interracial circles since Carl VanVechten's *Nigger Heaven.* Many people do not like it; many more are buying it. Nevertheless, the reaction is interesting, for here is the first novel on the South which throws into bold relief, and in an interesting fashion, the five areas of Southern problems—race, religion, politics, sex and economics. Read it as Bacon advised three hundred years ago, "not to contradict and confute; not to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider." (Reynal and Hitchcock, $2.75.)

13 Against The Odds by Julius Rosenwald Fund's President, Edwin R. Embree (Viking. $2.75), and *Rising Above Color* by Philip Henry Lotz (Association Press. $1.50), both deal with the careers of thirteen outstanding Negro personalities in the United States. If you like success stories of minority personalities you will find these two volumes interesting. Dr. Embree's character analyses are breezy, fresh, human, and up to date.

You might be interested in:

Ben Hecht's *A Guide For The Bedeviled* (Scribners, $2.50) because it is an exciting book on racial intolerance, particularly as it pertains to the problem of anti-Semitism.

Gerald W. Johnson's *American Heroes And Hero Worship* (Harper, $3.00) because one of the great ironies of Southern history is discussed in a chapter entitled "The Sons of Hagar."

Louis Fischer's *Empire* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, $1.00) because he tells us why a large part of the world is tired of being "the white man's burden."

R. M. MacIver's *Towards An Abiding Peace* (MacMillan, $2.50) because it points out how the dreams of statesmen can be translated into the substance of earth.

Lucille B. Milner's "Our Jim Crow Army" in *The Nation* for March 13, 1944, because it tells the human stories of segregation and discrimination in our armed services.